Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Rajasthan, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh are being considered; if so, the details thereof, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The following proposals have been received for inclusion as new Tiger Reserve:—

(1) Satkosia Gorge &Baisipada Wildlife Sanctuary —988sqkms — Orissa

(2) Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary— 1580sqkms — Chhattisgarh

(3) Chandoli Wildlife Sanctuary— 364sqkms — Maharashtra

(4) Wan, Ambabarwa, Namala Wildlife Sanctuary— 350sqkms — Maharashtra

In view of limited financial allocations, no decision has been taken to notify any new Tiger Reserve.

Unified authority for GM Crops

3373. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the frame-work for evaluation and approval of Genetically Modified Crops is based on rules framed way back in 1989, under the Environment Protection Act, which needs a relook, in view of the recent developments in molecular biotechnology; and

(b) whether GM evaluation process is protracted and cumbersome due to multiplicity of authorities like Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation and Genetic Engg. Approval Committee; if so, whether Government would create a unified regulatory authority?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The biosafety regulatory framework in India consists of the Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells, 1989 made by the Ministry of Environment and Forests under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and the guidelines issued by the Department of Biotechnology. The Government is following a policy of case by case approval of transgenic crops. Introduction of any new technology requires careful evaluation and long term sustainable benefits. Extensive Rules and guidelines have been made for evaluating the environmental and health safety aspects of genetically modified organisms. Any company involved in the use of genetic engineering techniques has to obtain the approval of the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation

(RCGM) set up under the 1989 Rules in the Department of Biotechnology for testing under laboratory conditions and confined field conditions. Thereafter, approval of GEAC is required for large scale field trials and introduction in the environment. This evaluation process is not cumbersome and protracted, and is necessary to adequately address the safety concerns of release of such GM products into the environment.

Protests against BT Cotton

†3374. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA':
SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EN VIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the farmers have refused to use Bt cotton and other genetically modified seeds and some people have protested against permission for its commercial cultivation;

(b) if so, the details regarding the reasons advanced therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Genetic Engineering Approval Committee is doing the experimental investigation with regard to the harm likely to occur due to its production and the impact of its use on animals;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether Government would stop the use of oil of Bt cotton seeds and its oil cake?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The conditional approval for commercial cultivation of Bt cotton by Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company (MAHYCO) has been by and large welcomed by various interest groups, including farmers' organizations, because of the improved economic benefits of cultivation of Bt cotton owing to reduced use of insecticides, control of target insect pests and improved yield. Some individuals, however, have expressed apprehensions about this new technology, particularly in relation to small farmers.

(c) to (e) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) set up under the Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells, 1989, notified under the Environment (Protection) Act 1986 is responsible for

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.